

# RAISING KIDS WHO READ





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## ABOUT THE YMCA

YMCA Canada is a federation of 50 YMCAs and 11 YMCA-YWCAs who work to support the growth of people in spirit, mind and body and to cultivate a sense of responsibility to each other and the global community. YMCA Canada fosters and stimulates the development of strong YMCA associations and advocates on their behalf regionally, nationally, and internationally.

## ABOUT THE ABUNDANT ASSETS ALLIANCE

YMCA Canada is part of the Abundant Assets Alliance, a partnership of YMCA Canada, YMCA of the USA, and the Search Institute working to ensure young people have the positive experiences, supports, and opportunities – the 40 developmental assets – that they need to thrive. To learn more about the developmental assets and how you can help your child build these assets in their life, visit the Alliance web site at [www.abundantassets.org](http://www.abundantassets.org).



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# INTRODUCTION

**“Children learn from adults.  
If you don’t read for fun,  
why would your kids?”**

ROBERT MUNSCH

We all know that a positive environment is vital for children to grow into healthy adults. The YMCA in Canada uses a values-based approach to give kids positive relationships with adults, good role models, supportive communities, and a commitment to learning.

Our reach also extends to strengthening families, as this is another key ingredient for a child’s healthy development. The YMCA offers many different ways for families and children to spend time together – to grow stronger and to thrive.

We are very pleased to bring you this booklet that reinforces the vital parent or adult-child relationship, and supports children’s ability to read for fun and to become lifelong learners.



As the largest service provider to children and youth in Canada, the YMCA works each and every day to give kids the essential building blocks or assets they need. Our mission of supporting people in spirit, mind and body and fostering a sense of responsibility is integral to everything that we do – from promoting good health and a healthy lifestyle to creating a sense of belonging and building lasting relationships.

The YMCA in Canada is using the asset approach described in this booklet, in its programs and services to give children and youth the support and experiences they need to become healthy and caring adults. The 40 developmental assets listed on the back cover are intended to support parents in their efforts to positively influence their child's life.

The Search Institute, an independent, non-profit research and education organization that provides leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities, developed the assets. YMCA Canada is partnered with the YMCA of the USA and the Search Institute in the Abundant Assets Alliance that works to strengthen our ability to build strong kids, strong families and strong communities.

As you read and use the activities in this booklet, think about what's important to you, and what you hope your kids will learn from and remember about you. You have a chance to be a true hero – to have a positive influence that will last throughout your child's lifetime.

This booklet is available to download on YMCA Canada's website at [www.ymca.ca](http://www.ymca.ca). Please share it with any parents and adults who would love to help raise a reader.

The YMCA offers many children's programs across Canada. Please consult your local YMCA for a full listing. To find your local YMCA visit [www.ymca.ca](http://www.ymca.ca).

# RAISING A READER

You don't have to look very far to find the most important job in the world. It's being the parent or primary caregiver of a child. It's doing one's best to give kids what it takes to be healthy and happy.

For parents and others who love and live with kids between the ages of 5 and 10, this booklet supports your efforts to build assets and raise readers. It links literacy – the ability to read and write – to the 40 developmental assets (see the back cover) that children need to thrive. Reading is the most important skill they must master if they are to succeed in school and later in life. Raising a reader requires raising a reader.

By focusing on children's developmental needs, you can tap into and build upon the uniqueness of your kids. Here are the 8 basic developmental needs, based on the 40 developmental assets, which all children need from adults taking care of them:

## **Support**

Parents who show that they love their children and will stand by them, no matter what.

## **Empowerment**

Parents who make it clear that children, especially their own, are valued and valuable for who they truly are.

## **Boundaries & Expectations**

Parents who have high yet realistic expectations for their children, and who set and uphold clear limits for their behaviour.

## **Constructive Use of Time**

Parents who help their children balance school, activities, time with friends, and time at home.

## **Commitment to Learning**

Parents who encourage and model a love of learning.

## **Positive Values**

Parents who talk about and model basic values such as honesty, trust, and responsibility.

## **Social Competencies**

Parents who instill in their children an interest in and comfort with other people, and who help them develop strong skills to relate respectfully to everyone and show consideration for the rights of others.

## **Positive Identity**

Parents who nurture their children's self-esteem, feeling of control over their own lives, and sense of hope.



In these pages, you will explore each of these eight developmental needs through the lens of children's stories. You'll find what you need to encourage your school-age child. Each category highlights a set of books that are too terrific to miss. Great attention has been given to including books that reflect the diversity of Canada. There are helpful answers to the repeated question, "What can I do to raise a reader?" and other questions for you to ask yourself about how you're doing at this all-important job. Charts and checklists offer an easy way to translate sound advice into effective action.

Dive in!

# SUPPORT

Parents who show that they love their children and will stand by them, no matter what.

**Family support • Positive family communication**

**Caring neighbourhood • Other adult relationships**

**Caring school climate • Parent involvement in schooling**



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## A Story of Support

Sometimes heroes appear in the most unlikely places.

Take Auntie Anna in *Once Upon a Time*, a story set in South Africa. She spends her Sundays relaxing in “a rusted-up old car” and reading with young Sarie. With this child by her side, she opens a book and changes her life.

Sarie wrestles with the words that catch in her throat when she’s called upon to read in school. Classmates laugh at her efforts. Helping her to become a reader, Auntie Anna saves her from further teasing.

She also saves Sarie from the sense of failure familiar to struggling readers everywhere. By the end of *Once Upon a Time*, it’s clear that this child, in the middle of nowhere, is heading somewhere – both the imagined and real places that reading can take one.

## How can you raise a reader?

Literacy – the ability to read and write – is essential if kids are to make it in this world. Sarie is lucky that Auntie Anna comes to the rescue in the absence of two hard-working, tired parents. However, experts tell us that generally, it is parents who are children’s first and most important teachers. In your family, do you honour the three Rs of literacy that turn children into readers and leaders? They are:

### Read-aloud time

Parents and other caregivers enjoy regularly-scheduled read-aloud sessions with their children. Studies show that 15 to 30 minutes each day makes the difference.

### Recommended reading

Only the best books are good enough for your child, any child, for that matter. Borrow plenty at the library. And because every child deserves to own a handful, try to buy some good ones. Keep them within reach. Carve out time to dive in.

### Relationships: Encourage these vital links:

- You are the positive role model. Bond and make memories, reading together.
- Read aloud with drama and expression and have fun!
- Find books that speak to your child’s interests – ones that make the hard work of reading print for understanding worth the effort.
- Bring books into life. Link each reading to the wider world with related talk and activities inspired by books.

Ask

- How do I feel about my own reading habits and read-aloud skills? Am I self-conscious?
- What, if anything, keeps me from reading to my child daily?
- What, if anything, keeps me from offering easy access to terrific books at home?

Act

- Keep a read-aloud record. For a week, tally up actual minutes spent reading to and with your child purely for pleasure.

MINUTES SPENT READING ALOUD EACH DAY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	TOTAL FOR WEEK

Dive in!

Asset-rich books that illustrate “support” and promise a good read:

Everything on a Waffle

by Polly Horvath. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre. 2001.

Once Upon a Time

with story and pictures by Niki Daly. Farrar. 2003.

Naomi and Mrs. Lumbago

by Gilles Tibo, illustrated by Louise-Andrée Laliberté, translated by Susan Ouriou. Tundra Books. 1996, 2001 (English edition).

Something From Nothing

retold and illustrated by Phoebe Gilman. Northwinds. 1992.

There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom

by Louis Sachar. Random House. 1987.

Waiting for Whales

by Sheryl McFarlane, illustrated by Ron Lightburn. Orca. 1991.





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# EMPOWERMENT

Parents who make it clear that children, especially their own, are valued and valuable for who they truly are.

**Community values youth • Youth as resources**  
**Service to others • Safety**

## A Story of Empowerment

In **The Fishing Summer**, the storyteller remembers the time his three uncles turned him into “a real fisherman.” At eight, he yearned to be counted as part of their crew. Falling overboard, the eight-year-old thought his mistake was “stupid.” His uncles, however, did not and focused on his strengths, not his weaknesses. They assured him that he brought them luck.

“He’s a natural,” brags one uncle. It was “the purest praise I ever heard,” the narrator tells the reader, “he was saying I was part of the family.”

At book’s end, the family fishing business has ended. The fish are gone now. Times may have changed, but children haven’t. They still long to feel a part of the family, within a circle of supportive grownups. Authentic praise still thrills and empowers them. When they can feel useful, children thrive.

## How can you raise a reader?

Some lucky kids get what they need to become successful readers. Others, even before they enter school, are at high risk. In one study of a wide range of families, all the parents wanted the best for their young children, including success in school. Recording everyday interactions in each family for years, the researchers discovered powerful predictors of success. Three factors in particular added up to what one might call the right stuff!

One involves parents’ attitudes about reading. In some places, without bookstores or adequate libraries, reading for pleasure may add up to hours in a year instead of a week. Even in these communities, however, parents can model a change in attitude. They practice show-and-tell. These parents show their kids in different ways that reading is an essential skill. Repeatedly they tell them that they admire their efforts to become readers. They read and talk daily.



A second factor is availability. Kids need an ever present supply of books if they are destined to read and succeed in school and in life. At home, a collection of books in corners with comfy seating and TV-free quiet time makes concentration and enjoyment possible. These families use books and other print as much as the toothbrush and the toaster.

Affirmation, the third factor, is especially empowering. Parents and other caregivers give out lots of positive comments to younger people. Grown-ups spend time catching kids being good. They're specific in their praise, whether it's about the books kids choose to read, or new ones they try to understand, or about any behaviour unrelated to reading. They give daily feedback, noticing each child's best traits.

In other families, twice as much criticizing or lecturing is the norm. Over time, "negatives" poison children and give them a "can't-do" mindset. In contrast, "positives" empower.

### Ask

- How would others describe my attitude about reading and books?
- How can I help shape my children's reading attitudes and behaviours through my actions?
- Do I give specific positive comments to my children about their reading skills and habits?

### Act

- Brainstorm "positives" you can express. Add a plus sign (+) each time you affirm your child this week. (I like your drawing! Smart choice! What a helper!)
- Monitor and tally up minus signs (-) for each criticism: (That was a dumb thing to do! Don't talk with your mouth full). Negatives cancel out positive feedback.



#### POSITIVE & NEGATIVE COMMENT TALLY FOR ONE WEEK

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	TOTAL
POSITIVE COMMENTS (+)								
NEGATIVE COMMENTS (-)								

#### Dive in!

Asset-rich books that illustrate “empowerment” and promise a good read:

##### Boxes for Katje

by Candace Fleming, illustrated by Stacey Dressen-McQueen. Farrar. 2003.

##### Caribou Song/atihko inikamon

by Tomson Highway, illustrated by Brian Deines. Harper Collins Ltd. 2001.

##### The Fishing Summer

by Teddy Jam, illustrated by Ange Zhang. Groundwood. 1997.

##### On Sand Island

by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, illustrated by David A. Johnson. Houghton. 2003.

##### Very Last First Time

by Jan Andrews, illustrated by Ian Wallace. Aladdin. 1998.

##### Ruler of the Courtyard

by Rukhsana Khan, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie. Viking. 2003.

# BOUNDARIES & EXPECTATIONS

Parents who have high yet realistic expectations for their children, and who set and uphold clear limits for their behaviour.

**Family boundaries • School boundaries**  
**Neighbourhood boundaries • Adult role models**  
**Positive peer influence • High expectations**

## A Story of Boundaries and Expectations

In *A Promise is a Promise*, Allashua ignores her mother's warning not to go fishing alone on the sea ice. She doesn't believe the legend about sea-creatures who grab unprotected children. She soon learns otherwise. When the Inuit girl escapes their clutches, she finds herself on thin ice, indeed. The sea-creatures free her on the condition that she sacrifice her brothers and sisters to them instead.

She tearfully confesses her mistakes to her parents. Convinced their remorseful daughter has learned her lesson without shaming or blaming, they are quick to offer support. They prefer problem-solving to punishment. These parents involve the whole family in outwitting the creatures. Inspired by memories of tales and time in the Arctic, Robert Munsch (and co-author Michael Kusugak) blend a traditional story with a modern-day setting in a story as suspenseful as any on TV.

## How can you raise a reader?

A book's content may be beyond a child's reading level. Picture books, for example, can have a reading level of third grade or higher. Are your expectations in line with your child's skills?

To decide which books are right for independent reading, notice if your child can read a few pages of a book with 95 percent accuracy. That is, does he or she miss only one out of every 20 words? If a young reader falters on one out of every ten words, take turns reading the book together. You can supply words too difficult for him or her to read. If your child misses more than one in ten, to reduce frustration, make this book one that you read aloud.



New readers still need breaks from the hard work of reading and understanding print. Parent-to-child read-alouds help beginners to focus more on a book’s meaning. By third grade, skilled readers have 12,000 words in their word banks while less skilled students know half that number. Books hold twice as many rare words as the talk on prime-time TV or the conversations of college graduates. Thus, older readers continue to build new vocabulary by listening to books or talking about stories. How do you make sure read-aloud time is a priority at your house?

Be aware of the number of hours devoted to “screen play” like cruising the information highway on the Internet. Such play has its place, of course. A couple of great destinations, for example, include the website for the TV series, *Between the Lions* at [www.pbskids.org/lions](http://www.pbskids.org/lions) and a poetry site at [www.poetry4kids.com](http://www.poetry4kids.com). However, spend more time in that other recreational vehicle, the book.

For good reason, the Canadian Pediatric Society and the Media Awareness Network urge parents to manage media use. They urge you to keep television, Internet-connected computers, and gaming equipment out of children’s bedrooms. Passive TV-watching and video-viewing gobble up hours. Kids from two to 17 now spend more time in front of the tube – an average of 25 hours of television per week in one study – than in any other activity. Of course, if parents are to successfully establish limits, they need to take a good hard look at their own media habits and change them if necessary.

**Ask**

- Do my expectations match my child’s age and stage in the reading journey?
- Am I careful not to compare the skills of one of my children with another?
- Do we set boundaries related to screen time? Does our family limit TV-watching and computer use to an hour or two per weekday?
- Does a parent supervise media choices?

**Act**

- Monitor your viewing habits for seven days.
- What changes, if any, do you need to make?

**HOURS SPENT WATCHING TV & VIDEO DURING ONE WEEK**

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	TOTAL TIME



### Dive in

Asset-rich books that illustrate “boundaries and expectations” and promise a good read:

#### **Arnie and the Skateboard Gang**

by Nancy L. Carlson. Viking. 1995.

#### **Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!**

by Mo Willems. Scholastic. 2003.

#### **Officer Buckle and Gloria**

by Peggy Rathmann. G. P. Putnam's. 1995.

#### **A Promise is a Promise**

by Robert Munsch and Michael Kusugak, illustrated by Vladyana Krykorka. Annick Press Ltd. 2003.

#### **Ramona the Pest**

by Beverly Cleary, illustrated by Louis Darling. Avon. 1968.

#### **Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear**

by Lensey Namioka. Joy Street Books. 1992.



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# CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

Parents who help their children balance school, activities, time with friends, and time at home.

**Creative activities • Youth programs**

**Religious community • Time at home**

## A Story of Constructive Use of Time

If you think reading poems is a waste of time, think again! Paul Bunyan comes striding over the mountain, “the moon slung on his back...” A poet makes a song of Canadian Indian place names: Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Athabaska, Iroquois...” A mosquito, out for blood, comes “winging – zooming and zinging – wickedly singing” over a bed. “Jeremy hasn’t a roof on his house – for he likes to look at the stars...” It’s all in *‘Til All the Stars Have Fallen*, one of many worthy collections of poetry that deserve a place in your read-aloud rituals.

## How can you raise a reader?

Ask somebody to give an example of constructive use of time and you’re likely to hear any number of suggestions – from fishing or field hockey to playing guitar or playing cards. You’re not likely to hear “reading poetry,” even though when it comes to turning any child into an able reader, it rates as one of the best things you can do.

When it comes to reading, poetry increases confidence and competence. Lots of white space on a page surrounding poems increases new readers’ willingness to tackle print. And the brief format increases their chances of success. Rhymes and strings of words beginning with the same sound (as in busy buzzing bumblebees or she sells seashells...) are just what children need to develop all-important phonetic awareness. This awareness is the ability to recognize differences in the sounds that make up words. It’s the foundation for understanding print on a page. Moreover, rich poetic language builds vocabulary which leads to skillful reading.

Poems give grown-ups and kids a chance to read expressively. The rhythm and repetition invite chiming in or reading in unison. Humorous poems invite laughter and are fun. Last, but not least, poetry offers mind-expanding ways of looking at the everyday world.

It's a shame that minutes reserved for reading aloud poems or any other kind of literature typically go down as a child's age goes up. Along with the time your child spends constructively learning a craft or a sport, or practicing a tune or a two-step, make time for rhyme.

Remember to bring all kinds of print into children's lives via board games, diaries, scripts for plays and puppet shows, grocery and to-do lists, song sheets, sports or hobby magazines, recipes, love notes, letter-writing, secret codes, nature journals, menus, and maps – all related to other constructive uses of time. Keep the books coming since experts recommend exposure to at least 100 per year – not likely if one confines book reading to school turf.

Ask

- Do we make time for rhyme at our house?
- How does our family spend free time with each other.

Act

For one week, notice time use. Then hold a family meeting to talk about any changes family members would like to make: fewer competitive activities, more creative ones, scheduled one-to-one times? Does daily reading rate a place in your schedule?

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME IN A WEEK	HOURS
SPORTS, PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES, AND SKILL-BUILDING	
TIME SPENT OUTDOORS	
CREATIVE OR DRAMATIC PLAY, UNSTRUCTURED FREE TIME	
ORGANIZED GROUP ACTIVITIES (YMCA, GUIDES, ETC.)	
ENGAGEMENT IN HOBBIES, COLLECTIONS, OR GAMES	
READ-ALoud TIME AND INDEPENDENT READING	
HOMEWORK OR CHORES	



### Dive in!

Asset-rich books that illustrate “constructive use of time” and promise a good read:

#### Bubblegum Delicious

by Dennis Lee, illustrated by David McPhail. Key Porter. 2000.

#### Hannah's Collections

by Marthe Jocelyn. Tundra Books. 2004.

#### Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices

by Paul Fleischman and Eric Beddows. HarperCollins. 1998.

#### The Kids Can Press Jumbo Book of Easy Crafts

by Judy Ann Sadler, illustrated by Caroline Price. Kids Can Press, Ltd. 2001.

#### The Kids Can Press Jumbo Book of Crafts

by Judy Ann Sadler, illustrated by Caroline Price. Kids Can Press, Ltd. 1997.

#### Knock at a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry

by X. J. and Dorothy M. Kennedy, illustrated by Karen Lee Baker.  
Little Brown & Company. 1999.

#### 'Til All the Stars Have Fallen: A Collection of Poems for Children

selected by David Booth, illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton.  
Penguin Books Canada Ltd. 1989.

# COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

Parents who encourage and model a love of learning.

**Achievement motivation • School engagement • Homework  
Bonding to school • Reading for pleasure**

## Stories of Commitment to Learning

In *The Several Lives of Orphan Jack*, 12-year-old Jack leaves the orphanage with no family or fortune. Rich in ideas and a love of learning, Jack is bound to make a mark.

This lover of words tempts readers to dive into his favourite book, the dictionary, as he tussles with “turnips, trouble and trepidation.” This funny folk tale offers an enduring truth – lifelong learners have plans, concepts, and opinions to share.

Unlike Orphan Jack’s world, Nicholas Allen’s is asset-rich. In the popular book, *Frindle*, he’s blessed with a loving family and a supportive community. A project inspired by an incident at school brings him fame and fortune.

Both characters enjoy an ongoing engagement with ideas. These critical thinkers have a commitment to learning that brings them rewards beyond their imagination.

## How can I raise a reader?

Along with Nick and Jack, the dictionary is a “star” in these two stories. It deserves a place on the bookshelf of any reader from the third grade up. However, if children are to be nurtured with interesting words and imagined worlds long before they’re ready for this handy resource, they need to digest much more and sooner.

Parents will do almost anything to keep their children from going hungry. Similarly, they must honour the importance of providing “food for thought”, stocking up on books. Not just any books will do. If the content is going to speak to kids, it must be appropriate for their age.

Grown-ups can see what appeals to their beginning independent reader. In your child’s favourite book, notice the size of the print, the number of words per page, and the kind of story that satisfies. Then make available more of the same until the reader reaches another ability level.

If your child avoids reading, stock up on the types of books that attract reluctant readers – joke and riddle books, comics, non-fiction, hobby or sports magazines, humorous stories, and celebrity or athlete biographies.

On library visits, add best bets to the pile of books your child chooses. Give books on birthdays and holidays and send the message: We value books and you're worthy of them. In the books you choose, look for essential elements. Alphabet, counting, and concept books encourage a child to make friends with facts, particularly the building blocks of language and our number system. Books of high quality are more likely to invite repeat encounters and boost brainpower.

Wordless books empower young children to use their own words as they mimic the reading ritual. They inspire older kids as they copy the storytelling format in their writing.

Bilingual books are especially welcome in families with a first language other than English.

"Healers and helpers" are characters in books that explore a challenge or crisis common to an age group. They remind kids that they're not alone in their fear or frustration. They put into words feelings a child has not been able to express.

Folk tales and fantasy, poetry and rhyme enrich the imagination. Books like ones featured in these pages reflect assets-in-action. Books with a multicultural range of characters of both genders expand horizons and build understanding. The end result is a feast of words and images for hungry minds.

### Ask

- After taking an inventory of your child's home library, what areas are missing check marks?
- What essential elements need to be added to the collection?
- Are you providing a balance of books too terrific to miss?

#### AN INVENTORY OF YOUR HOME LIBRARY

NONFICTION, ALPHABET, COUNTING, CONCEPT BOOKS								
AWARD WINNERS: HIGH QUALITY, APPEALING								
HEALERS AND HELPERS: ABOUT COMMON CHANGES AND A RANGE OF FEELINGS								
HUMOUROUS BOOKS: THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE								
MULTICULTURAL, MULTI-ABILITY								
POETRY AND RHYME								
FOLKTALES AND FANTASY								
WORDLESS BOOKS								
BILINGUAL BOOKS: IF USING OR LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE								
ASSET-RICH BOOKS								

## Act

Budget for books. Build a valued collection, an investment in your children's future. Go weekly to your local library and get a variety of books for your children.

## Dive in!

Asset-rich books that illustrate "commitment to learning" and promise a good read:

**Aha!: The Most Interesting Book You'll Ever Read About Intelligence (Mysterious You)**  
by Trudee Romanek, illustrated by Rose Cowles. Kids Can Press. 2004.  
(Ages 8 and up)

**Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance**  
by Ian Wallace. Groundwood. 1992.

**Frindle**  
by Andrew Clements, illustrated by Brian Selznick. Simon & Schuster BFYR. 1992.

**Oh, The Places You'll Go!**  
by Dr. Seuss. Random House. 1990.

**7 x 9 = Trouble**  
by Claudia Mills, illustrated by G. Brian Karas. Douglas & McIntyre. 2002.

**The Several Lives of Orphan Jack**  
by Sarah Ellis, illustrated by Bruno St-Aubin.  
Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre. 2003.





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# POSITIVE VALUES

Parents who talk about and model basic values such as honesty, trust, and responsibility.

**Caring • Equality and social justice • Integrity**  
**Honesty • Responsibility • Restraint**

## A Story of Positive Values

Leon and the fun-loving neighbours who live in his hometown ramble through the pages of a novel for beginning readers, **The Thumb in the Box**. When the citizens of New Auckland request a simple water pump to put out fires, the government sends an unneeded fire truck. In a village with no vehicles whatsoever, they are not about to build a road or add a fire hydrant. They stay true to their values but cause quite a commotion in the process.

A member of Parliament, who delivers the truck by barge, looks on in astonishment as they dismantle it in the ocean. The uses to which they put various parts of the otherwise useless vehicle are creative. Along with the laughs, the book paints a picture of a community with a shared vision, where caring and compassion are the order of the day. Here, everyone takes responsibility for each other's welfare.

## How can I raise a reader?

Another hallmark of this story is how naturally grown-ups and kids are in conversation and in relationship with each other. Sharing books gives real grown-ups and children a chance to do likewise. They offer a way to preview situations that call for honesty, restraint or caring – any number of positive values. Without being dreary or preachy, they strengthen character. In fact, whether a book reflects a healthy, happy lifestyle or describes a very different reality, parent and child become explorers on a quest for greater understanding.

On his or her own, a fifth grader may tackle a novel like Sarah Ellis' **The Breadwinner**, set in war-torn Afghanistan. It's a lucky child, however, who reads it elbow to elbow with a caring adult. The bestseller has its share of searing images – of children harvesting human bones in a cemetery, for example. What a gift to share and discuss with your child feelings of outrage and sympathy.

Parents and children acknowledge their own positive values in concert with certain characters and in contrast to others. **The Secret Life of Owen Skye** by Alan Cumyn is a laugh-out-loud funny book for readers ten and up. It has raised some eyebrows because of the dangerous situations in which Owen and his brothers find themselves. Owen's older brother repeatedly tests boundaries and tempts fate, for example. What's a younger brother to do?

As Owen finds himself in one pickle after another – whether it's starting a brush fire while fiddling with matches or facing a beating by bullies – adult and child can compare reactions and propose alternate solutions.

**Ask**

- Do we make time for extended talk, particularly before and after reading?
- Do I ask my child to express his or her feelings about the books being read?
- Do I welcome questions from my children about values?

**Act**

Am I conscious of the following ways to get more out of a shared read-aloud experience?

<b>WHEN WE READ TOGETHER, WE...</b>	✓
<b>PLAY DETECTIVE</b> PREDICTING FROM A BOOK COVER WHAT'S GOING TO COME, DISSECTING A LONG WORD TO FIND ITS ROOT	
<b>USE DIFFERENT VOICES</b> TAKING TURNS READING ALOUD EVERY OTHER PAGE, DRAMATIZING CHARACTERS' VOICES	
<b>WELCOME QUESTIONS</b> I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY SHE... WHAT DOES THIS WORD MEAN?	
<b>VISUALIZE DETAILS</b> IMAGINING WHAT CHARACTERS ARE WEARING, WHAT A PLACE LOOKS AND SMELLS LIKE	
<b>ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS</b> WHAT IF...? WHY DO YOU THINK HE MADE THAT CHOICE?	
<b>RECALL AND RETELL</b> WHERE WERE WE WHEN WE ENDED LAST TIME? WHAT'S YOUR VERSION OF THE STORY?	
<b>EXPRESS FEELINGS AND OPINIONS</b> WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE? WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART? I FELT SAD WHEN...	
<b>LINK READING TO LIFE</b> THIS STORY REMINDS ME OF THE TIME WE... LET'S EAT WITH CHOPSTICKS TOO...	



### Dive in!

Asset-rich books that illustrate “positive values” and promise a good read:

#### Each Living Thing

by Joanne Ryder, illustrated by Ashley Wolff. Harcourt. 2000.

#### Grandmother Bryant's Pocket

by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, illustrated by Petra Mathers. Houghton Mifflin. 1996.

#### The Incredible Journey

by Sheila Burnford. Hodder and Stoughton. 1961.

#### Roses Sing on New Snow: A Delicious Tale

by Paul Yee, illustrated by Harvey Chan. Groundwood Books. 2003.

#### Stone Soup

retold and illustrated by Jon J. Muth. Scholastic Press. 2003.

#### The Thumb in the Box

by Ken Roberts, illustrated by Leanne Franson. Groundwood Books. 2002.

# SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

Parents who instill in their children an interest in and comfort with other people, and who help them develop strong skills to relate respectfully to everyone and show consideration for the rights of others.

**Planning and decision-making • Interpersonal competence**  
**Cultural competence • Resistance skills**  
**Peaceful conflict resolution**

## A Story of Social Competencies

Meet Suki. She's a self-possessed first grader, heading to school on the first day in **Suki's Kimono**.

Suki decides to wear the kimono given to her by her grandmother, or obāchan. She already has worn it in a Japanese festival. Her two older sisters warn her not to. It's not cool. And she'll be teased. She determines to follow through with her plan, even in the face of their dire warnings. She's proud of her heritage. She loves the kimono.

On the way to school, Suki lifts her arms and lets the butterfly sleeves of the kimono flutter in the breeze. "It made her feel like she'd grown her own set of wings."

It becomes clear that this child is destined to fly. Suki shows what it looks like to be rich in the 40 assets kids need to thrive. As the story unfolds, this small child's choices and strong character illustrate the assets that represent the category called Social Competencies.

As her sisters had predicted, interpersonal competence is called for any number of times when the teasing and laughter and comments of others could easily get the best of a first grader.

Here's a child who can skitter successfully between a present-day world of playground and classroom and a traditional world celebrated in the summer festival she attended.

When certain classmates do not show respect, Suki practices self-control. Resistance skills keep her from taking the bait, for instance, when someone calls out, "She's a bat!"





“Suki felt her cheeks burn, but she did not respond. Instead, she concentrated on sitting up straight and tall, the way her obāchan always did,” writes the author. By the end of this story with its peaceful resolution, readers are as glad as Suki that she triumphs.

### How can I raise a reader?

Introducing your child to memorable characters like Suki is a way to widen your child’s world. There are friends to be made, a human circle to be expanded. You can make the introductions through the pages of great books. No matter how isolated the place on the map your children call home, they can travel through books across the planet. They can see the world through other eyes and be the wiser for it.

This story plays out against a backdrop of grown-ups who clearly play a role in Suki’s resilient behavior. She gets support from a loving grandmother, an accepting parent, and a teacher who claps at just the right moment, leading the way for others to affirm Suki. Another important way to show such support is to offer the right book at the right time.

### Ask

- Do you usually choose only books that feature characters of your child’s gender, so-called boy books or girl books? (Every child deserves to read memorable stories with resourceful characters of both genders).
- When’s the last time you read a book that builds empathy and appreciation for someone with a disability, as in [How Smudge Came?](#)
- Does your child’s literary world mirror the real one?

## Act

With your child, recollect books read together or independently that feature characters of a colour or culture different from your own. Place a check mark next to each that applies. Then seek out books that provide missing links to a bigger world.

HERITAGE	BOOK READ
ABORIGINAL / FIRST NATIONS	
AFRICAN	
ASIAN	
CAUCASION / NORTHERN EUROPEAN	
FRENCH / FRENCH SPEAKING	
LATINO / LATINA / HISPANIC	

## Dive in!

Asset-rich books that illustrate “social competencies” and promise a good read:

### The Final Game

(sequel to The Moccasin Goalie) by William Roy Bownridge.  
Orca Books Publishers. 1997.

### How Smudge Came

by Nan Gregory, illustrated by Ron Lightburn.  
Northern Lights Press/Red Deer College Press. 1995.

### The Jacket

by Andrew Clements. Simon & Schuster BFYR. 2002. (Ages 8 and up)

### Lights for Gita

by Rachna Gilmore, illustrated by Alice Priestley. Tilbury House. 1994.

### Noses are Red

by Richard Scrimger. Tundra Books. 2002. (Ages 8 and up)

### The Party

by Barbara Reid. North Winds Press/Scholastic Canada Ltd. 1997.

### Suki's Kimono

by Chieri Uegaki, illustrated by Stéphane Jorisch. Kids Can Press. 2003.



RAISING KIDS WHO READ

# POSITIVE IDENTITY

Parents who nurture their children's self-esteem, feeling of control over their lives, and sense of hope.

**Personal power • Self-esteem**

**Sense of purpose • Positive view of personal future**

## A Story of Positive Identity

Ten-year-old Bud wants to find family when he sets out on an amazing journey in the award-winning **Bud, Not Buddy**. It's the memory of his mother who died when he was six that encourages him to imagine a better future. He remembers the books she read to him at night and "that no matter how long it took she'd read until I went to sleep."

Having known such love, he can weather hardships. He can recognize the people who will love him, no matter what. At last, Bud finds himself among people who let him be himself:

"All of a sudden I knew that of all the places in the world that I'd ever been in this was the one. That of all the people I'd ever met these were the ones. This was where I was supposed to be."

He tells the reader; "...something whispered to me in a language that I didn't have any trouble understanding. It said, "Go ahead and cry, Bud, you're home."

## How can you raise a reader?

A Canadian third-grader's inability to skim on skates across a rink may be cause for surprise. A third-grader's inability to skim a page of a grade-level book and to understand its meaning must be cause for alarm.

Recognizing a struggling reader calls for immediate action. A wait-and-see attitude by parents and teachers is no longer acceptable. Experts agree that troubleshooting must begin as soon as possible. Much of a person's success depends on the ability to do well in school. Reading for meaning is a skill needed in virtually every subject area. Too often, failure to master this skill affects a child's sense of worth. At risk is positive identity.

Anxious parents sense or remember this fact of life. To pretend that such difficulties don't matter does a disservice to children. They are already likely to perceive their difference from others. They may blame their struggle on a lack of intelligence or know-how. In fact, children with learning disabilities are likely to be unusually gifted in other areas. Many famous people claim this particular difference.

Children deserve to know the truth – that such difficulties may exist simply because the pattern of brain activity differs when they do reading tasks. With proper diagnosis, there are methods to overcome such a disability. There are strategies to match sounds with segments of words, for example. Among all the ways we can build positive identity in our children, one of the most important is giving them what they need to become confident and capable readers.

Ask

- Do you recognize any signs in the checklist of difficulties or disabilities related to your child's reading development?

INDICATORS	✓
DIFFICULTY GRASPING CONCEPT OF RHYMING WORDS (KINDERGARTEN)	
TROUBLE NAMING LETTER OR WORDS' BEGINNING SOUNDS	
PROBLEMS RELATED TO SEEING OR HEARING	
CHALLENGES REGARDING FOLLOWING SIMPLE DIRECTIONS	
NOT READING AT ALL BY THE MIDDLE OF GRADE 1	
DIFFICULTY PAYING ATTENTION	
DIFFICULTY FORMING PRINTED LETTERS	
NOT READING GRADE-LEVEL BOOKS BY MIDYEAR (GRADE 2)	
MISCUES: RARELY NOTICING READING MISTAKES	
SKIPPING OVER LONG WORDS, GUESSING MANY	
COMPLAINTS ABOUT READING AS "TOO HARD"	
AVOIDANCE OF READING OR WRITING	
NOTICEABLY BEHIND PEERS IN READING/WRITING	
NOT READING GRADE-LEVEL BOOKS BY MIDYEAR (GRADE 3)	
LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT'S BEEN READ	
MISREADS WORDS WITH MULTIPLE SYLLABLES	
MOST OF THE ABOVE	

## Act

Inform yourself. Helpful websites include:

- All Kinds of Minds ([www.allkindsofminds.org](http://www.allkindsofminds.org))
- International Dyslexia Association ([www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org))
- LD Online ([www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org))
- Schwab Learning ([www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org))

If you see your child has difficulty reading or suspect a disability, speak up. Insist on a private or school assessment. If it pinpoints specific learning disabilities, take steps to find:

- approved structured reading programs
- multisensory ways of learning to read
- school support
- tutoring

Kids with reading challenges also need outlets like sports, creative activities, and other confidence-building uses of time. All children, regardless of their abilities, benefit from daily read-aloud sessions and, once they are understanding print, they need time devoted to reading aloud to caring grown-ups. All deserve frequent reminders that they're loved, not for what they can or cannot do, but just for being themselves. They become part of a family empowered to choose and to create a positive future.

## Dive in!

Asset-rich books that illustrate "positive identity" and promise a good read:

### Anne of Green Gables

by L. M. Montgomery, illustrated by Laura Fernandez and Rick Jacobson. Tundra Books. 2000. (Ages 9 and up)

### Bud, Not Buddy

by Christopher Paul Curtis. Delacorte Press. 1999. (Ages 8 and up)

### Life on the Farm

by Heather Gardam. Penguin Books Canada. 2001.

### Omar On Ice

by Maryann Kovalski. Fitzhenry & Whiteside. 1999.

### A Place to Grow

by Soyung Pak, illustrated by Marcelino Truong. Scholastic Press. 2002.

### Scooter

by Vera B. Williams. Greenwillow Books. 1993.

# REWARDING POSITION AVAILABLE NOW!

**Wanted: Parents of five to ten-year-olds  
for an extraordinary mission.**

Other primary caregivers also may apply. Little experience necessary. Looking for everyday heroes with heartfelt desire to transform a life. Will be linking assets and literacy, reading and leading, via on-the-job training. May start immediately, reading to and with a child still within reach. Full benefits for both.

Give your child your presence and your presents – the best of books and time spent celebrating them together. Answer the call!





RAISING KIDS WHO READ

# BEST BETS

Your local library has the best take-out in town. In addition to asking a librarian for direction, use the following resources to find books that are best for your children:

## 100 Best Canadian Books for Today's Children and Teens

selected by the children's librarians of the Toronto Public Library:

[www.tpl.toronto.on.ca/kidsspace/grownups/100bestbooks.htm](http://www.tpl.toronto.on.ca/kidsspace/grownups/100bestbooks.htm)

## A Guide to Canadian Children's Books in English

by Deirdre Baker and Ken Settrington.

McClelland & Stewart Ltd. 2003. ISBN 0-7710-1064-8.

## Children's Picture Book Database

available at [www.lib.muohio.edu/pictbks](http://www.lib.muohio.edu/pictbks)

# 40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS KIDS NEED TO SUCCEED

## EXTERNAL ASSETS

### Support

- Family support
- Positive family communication
- Other adult relationships
- Caring neighbourhood
- Caring school climate
- Parent involvement in schooling

### Empowerment

- Community values youth
- Youth as resources
- Service to others
- Safety

### Boundaries & Expectations

- Family boundaries
- School boundaries
- Neighbourhood boundaries
- Adult role models
- Positive peer influence
- High expectations

### Constructive Use of Time

- Creative activities
- Youth programs
- Religious community
- Time at home

## INTERNAL ASSETS

### Commitment to Learning

- Achievement motivation
- School engagement
- Homework
- Bonding to school
- Reading for pleasure

### Positive Values

- Caring
- Equality and social justice
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Restraint

### Social Competencies

- Planning and decision making
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- Resistance skills
- Peaceful conflict resolution

### Positive Identity

- Personal power
- Self-esteem
- Sense of purpose
- Positive view of personal future

We build strong kids,  
strong families,  
strong communities.



Plus de vie à la vie  
des jeunes, des familles  
et de la communauté.

YMCA